

HOW TO RESIST THE DEVIL



INSIGHTS IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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**How to Resist the Devil
Insights in Spiritual Warfare**

F. J. Perryman

*originally titled “Whom Resist”
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Publisher's Note

Little is known about the author, F. J. Perryman, beyond what is revealed in this writing. Because he did not clearly address the danger of falling away from salvation, the text has been revised and the section “Recognizing the Devil’s Purpose and Plan” has been expanded to present some Scriptural warnings against being drawn away from our security in Christ.

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Part 1: Surveying the Field of Operations

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the [‘your’ RV] faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

If I do not resist the devil, things very soon go wrong with me. I know that he is my adversary, and if I become unwatchful and unguarded, he surely, though perhaps slowly, gains on me, and God’s work is hindered. If you’re a true child of God, you are no exception to the rule. Satan will oppose you and challenge you, but remember that in Christ you may always triumph.

Satan is a powerful foe. No human being can hope to cope with him. The believer cannot take the offensive against him, but he can resist him. The word *resist* means “to withstand, to be firm against someone else’s onset.”

The word *resist* also indicates that we are not to flee from this enemy. Courage is called for in this fight, and courage God will give His child. Satan and his forces have to flee when the Christian stands his ground in the might of the Lord. Our standing, or maintaining our ground, is the goal in this battle (Eph. 6:13).

The book of Ephesians gives ample proof that God will provide His child with the needed strength for the conflict. In chapter one we read of the “*exceeding greatness of [the Father’s] power to usward who believe.*” (v.19) In the sixth chapter, the armor for the conflict points to Christ. In verse 18 of the same chapter the Holy Spirit’s contribution to our help in the warfare is emphatically expressed. It is through prayer, controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit, that we put on the armor, which is Christ, and find ourselves empowered by the Father. Each member of the Trinity has a part in the believer’s victory over the evil one. We must always remember that our help lies in God and not ourselves. Humble yourself under God’s hand, and He will exalt you (1 Pet. 5:6).

Let it be added here that there is only one devil, but there are a myriad of subordinate spirits operating under Satan unseen. Usually our personal combat is with these, but I have almost exclusively adopted the word *devil* as a general and all-embracing term.

Tempted and Tried by the Devil

I thank God that comparatively early in my life He opened my eyes to what the devil could do; then He showed me my responsibility and what I could do as a “*new creature*” in Christ Jesus by resisting the devil. I feel that I owe my life to the use of this truth. I have been sorely tempted, terribly harassed, and driven to despair, feeling helpless, hopeless, and abandoned of God; but by His grace I have risen again and again in the name of the Lord, resisted the devil, and triumphed. Oh, the patience and love of God!

Many Christians have had painful experiences which can be understood only in the light of 1 Peter 5:8-9. From this passage it is clear that Satan and his confederate hosts ceaselessly, tirelessly, maliciously, and deliberately seek the life of the real believer in Christ. All sorts of objections may be voiced against this conclusion, but when the last argument is ended, God’s Word still says, “*Your adversary the devil... walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith.*” (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

Indeed the warning is given because of the peril we face. To “*be sober*” means, “to be sane; to be mentally self-controlled.” The words “*be vigilant*” carry the thought, “be awake and watchful.” In this passage, God alerts us to our adversary’s presence in this world, and to the fact of his wild, beast-like character.

To “Resist” Is As Important As to “Be Filled”

The subject may be one from which you have recoiled, owing to the unwholesome stress laid upon it by some, but that does not alter the truth, unmistakably revealed, that it is as much a command of God to “*resist the devil*” (Jas. 4:7) as it is to “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18) and to “*love one another.*” (Jn. 13:34) Every believer who knows anything about the filling of the Spirit must eventually be faced with a situation which involves the necessity of resisting the devil. The surge of God’s life through us cannot continue its course unhindered without at some point bringing us definitely into contact and combat with the satanic forces that control the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 11:14).

The devil is your adversary. He will never be your friend, though he will pose as such. He will never be off duty, though there may be times when his active opposition may not be as apparent as at other times.

Satan As a Chameleon

Peter's admonition is directly applicable to us today. The devil's character has in no way been altered since Peter, under inspiration, wrote the epistles which bear his name. Satan is still a liar, a murderer, a divider, and a counterfeiter, and he assumes any other role that suits his purpose for the moment.

He goes about "*as a roaring lion*." (1 Pet. 5:8) He is on the move. If he appears as "*an angel of light*," (2 Cor. 11:14) then the danger is the greater to us. Here also is an added reason for enlightened eyes, released wills, courageous hearts, and endued spirits to rally to the need of our day. By submitting ourselves to God, we will put into force those infallible weapons of victory which have been forged and sealed in the cross of Him who, at Calvary, cast out "*the prince of this world*," (Jn. 12:31) completely stripped off the (evil) principalities and powers, and "*made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*." (Col. 2:15)

Stand Up, Resist, Overcome!

I meet many Christian people who will do anything to evade this question about the devil. They believe that he exists. They admit that he is busy. But when I suggest that they withstand him—to say something like, "I now resist the devil and his attempt to get me to do this or that"—they object. "Oh, no," they reply, "I just leave it to the Lord. I am too weak and frail to tackle the devil. He is too strong for me."

But it is God who tells us to resist Satan, though not in our own strength. He says, "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*." (Eph. 6:10) Stand up, draw the sword, resist, withstand, overcome!

Read where you like in the record of Scripture, and you will always find the endued man of God as the instrument of challenge to the devil—registering the victory of the cross over him.

This is no isolated work reserved for certain outstanding characters only. It is to be the common lot of every believer born from above. Each one of God's children lives his earthly span in a world where at every step he is challenged and opposed by wicked spirits under Satan's leadership.

The Early Christians Fought This War

God declared war on the devil from the moment he deceived our first parents, and it is clear from Genesis 3:15 that nothing but enmity is to exist between those born of God and the adversary. Such enmity is in the divine nature. Let it work.

The twelve apostles encountered this warfare (Mt. 10:1); the seventy were specially commissioned in it and proved the name which is above every name (Lk. 10:17-20). In the same manner, those apostles and prophets who were called and commissioned after the Lord ascended up on high (Eph. 4:8,11) had the unseen world unveiled to them and knew that their battle was not with mere flesh and blood (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

With all the intensity possible I want to say that there is more in this than most Christians are willing to admit. Both revelation and experience have compelled me to face it, or go under. I was not born from above to go under; I was born to triumph, and if I choose to triumph, I may. But if I close my eyes to these things, I shall not triumph. I can afford to be ignorant of nothing. Neglect any part of God's revelation that His Spirit has unveiled and you place yourself in peril (2 Tim. 3:16). Next to being saved through the merits of the precious blood of Christ and being empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, I believe that there is no truth so vital to healthy, vigorous, fruitful Christian service as to know of the devil and to stand up to him in the name and power of our living Lord.

Do not let this counsel go unheeded. Gird yourself for the fray. Be *“made powerful in the Lord.”* (Eph. 6:10 RV, margin) Dare to settle it and say, “Whatever it means to resist the devil and overcome, I will do it.”

The Devil Makes Us Lazy

I had some of the most outstanding experiences of my early Christian life in this realm when I was in business. I often found myself laboring under a peculiar lethargy that made work difficult. Though I fought it first as laziness, and then as heaviness, due perhaps to unsuitable diet, still I did not get the relief that I thought I should. It was a puzzle and a burden to myself, for when I most needed to be awake, I was often sleepy; and when I needed rest and tried to get it, the activity of my brain was abnormal. At other times I was neither tired nor spiritless, but there would come upon me a sense of awful pressure—a stifling

atmospherical something that depressed me, confused me, and slowed up activity. "Ah! the weather!" Yes, the weather is blamed for a lot that the devil does (Eph. 2:2; Mk. 4:39). I hoped that the morrow would bring relief, but if it did, it was only temporary. Slowly but surely the oppression would come, and the heaviness would gather over me. I knew a certain amount of truth about the devil, but it never occurred to me that he had touched me without my knowing it.

Think of it! I could generally see where he had someone else in his toils, gaining on them and deceiving them; but as for me, I was safe enough, for did I not often mention him in my prayer? One day, however, after a spell of this sluggishness and oppression, I read somewhere about a spirit of sloth and slumber. "Then," said I to myself, "there *are* spirits that lull us to sleep, that dull our senses, arrest our activities, and oppose the normal operations of life!" I jumped to my feet as one awakened from a half-dazed state and cried, "I am having no more of this! This is of the devil, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, Who conquered him at Calvary, I resist these spirits and their power over me." The effect was most striking. Immediately I was different. The deception had been unveiled, the needed resistance had been given me from the Lord, and through Him, through faith in His name, the spell of wicked spirits upon me was broken.

I remember how wonderfully clear my mind became. I did better work and in less time, so that my foreman commented on it. Hundreds of times since then I have done the same thing in meeting new assaults. I have also witnessed striking deliverances in the lives of some of God's people who have been subjected to the most desperate and distressing cases of Christian conflict imaginable.

Satan Seeks to Kill

Do you think I can bury such experiences under the debris of mistaken ideas? Never! The devil has been too real to me to mistake him. I have encountered his spirits too often to want to ignore them. Let those who will shelve the issue and evade the battle. I have to stand by the revealed Word and recognize that the devil is still my adversary, that he is still actively opposed to me and you. He still walks about and diligently searches to see if he may find some of us sufficiently off our guard. When he finds such, he tries to draw them into his meshes and devour their life, silence their witness, stop them

from praying, or involve them in a fatal accident. Ah, the devil is still a murderer! Analyze the coroner's inquests and the daily chapter of fatalities in the air, on land, on the sea, and tell me the percentage that is of God's ordering.

This brings me to a phase of satanic activity that seems to have grown considerably in recent years. I refer to the number of Christian people who have lost their mental balance and have had to be placed under protective treatment. Now, it is far from me to say that all these cases are the result of direct satanic oppression, but some are. The souls who have been delivered by an application of the truth which I have already pointed out are ample proof of it.

Satan Wrecks Minds

The mind has always been a citadel for which the devil has striven. We read that "*the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*" (2 Cor. 4:4) The devil is tireless in his efforts to get a wrong thought, impression, or idea lodged in the mind of people. This he attempts usually through the agency of evil spirits, and they, in turn, through mixing a certain amount of truth with error. Volumes could be filled with the record of the almost inconceivable number of methods by which children of God have been deceived by Satan. That they were children of God did not save them; nor in many cases was it because they were ungrounded in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I can recall the cases of men whose names, in their day, were household words in Christian circles, but who, nevertheless, were ensnared. My point is this: allowing for all that is embraced in the mysteries of suffering and divine providence, there are still cases which can be understood only in these words: "*your adversary the devil... walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith.*" (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

The highway of the church is strewn with a sufficient number of mental and physical wrecks to make us seriously wonder if there is not some truth with reference to Calvary which these folks missed or ignored. I believe there is. One's spirit sometimes groans because of the cry of their bound souls, but it is not sufficient to groan and pity; we must act. Calvary has bequeathed both a charter of freedom and a weapon of emancipation which we must use for their deliverance. We cannot say that there is no immediate or progressive release other

than that of death for them until we have done our part to liberate them from the satanic powers that deceive and blind them.

We cannot merely cast the responsibility on the Lord and supplicate for His will to be done, and leave it there. It may be precisely and definitely His will to resist the devil, and for us to do it, not someone else. Test it, and see what happens. Get the enemy exposed and then claim Christ's victory over him. I know of cases where no change for the better occurred in the condition until the work of the devil was exposed and he was withstood in the name of the Lord. In some cases it will be necessary to gain the cooperation of the afflicted person before complete deliverance can be effected.

Use God's Armor

To me the Christian life is nothing unless it is a battlefield. It is not all battlefield, but the spoil is wrested from the enemy on the battlefield of faith. Armor, shield, sword—for what are these if there is no battle? Are we to use a sword on our friends? Alas! it seems that some souls will do that rather than resist the devil. They will resist the Lord's witness and oppose anything that interferes with their own purposes and plans, but as for obeying the divine command that will save them from the devil's snares and make them, through the power of God, deliverers of others, that is either heresy or for someone else.

I would not write in this vein if I had not seen the terrible havoc wrought by this awful neglect. Some are awakening to the reality of the situation through the crucible of painful experiences in their home, or circle, or church; but let us not wait until the devil is deeply entrenched before we begin to resist him.

There is nothing to fear. Fear of this kind belongs to the pit and is one of the devil's favorite weapons. "*In nothing terrified by your adversaries,*" (Php. 1:28) says the apostle. "*Be strong [be made powerful] in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Eph. 6:10)—that is sufficient. "*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" (1 Jn. 4:4) Remember that God wants to do this through you.

The Devil Has Years of Experience

What use is it to argue that because you are "*in Christ,*" the devil cannot touch you, when many who believe that are falling on every hand? It is true that if we are really in Christ, we are "*hid with Christ*

in God." (Col. 3:3) But if you make "*provision for the flesh*," (Rom. 13:14) you will sin. If you "*give place to the devil*," (Eph. 4:27) you are open to defeat. Besides, there is no point in the Apostle Paul's saying, "*Neither give place to the devil*," if he cannot touch you. The devil can touch you if you let him.

To plead ignorance here is no defense. The Holy Spirit of God is willing to teach us all we need to know, but if we reject His instructions, we will be responsible for our ignorance of the devil's devices and will fall an easy prey to his wiles. The process of deception may be slow. It usually is. Few people fall into his hands suddenly. Something in the nature of a creeping paralysis is what the devil seeks to inflict. His assaults are usually hidden behind something natural or physical. Watch them, and be ready to resist. If the devil cannot catch you on the plains of the flesh, the heights of spiritual attainment will not escape his keen attention. He is clever and has had at least 6,000 years of experience in setting traps for the saints.

I was startled one day to discover that Satan has laid skillfully devised and well-organized plans against the believer and the Church. These he daily seeks to bring to fruition. The Holy Scriptures speak of these plans under the highly descriptive terms of "*wiles*"—cunning deceit—and "*devices*." It is by their use that the forces of Satan try to thwart, or hold up, the purposes of the Lord through His children. I do not mean by this that the Sovereignty of God is at stake. Eventually, devil or no devil, the purpose of God in redemption will be thoroughly wrought out.

But Satan can and does hinder and obstruct, and we can become one of the casualties. Not every believer who has died has a well-fought battle and a finished course to his credit, and not every soldier who started for heaven has remained faithful unto death. But he could have had. It is delightful to know that he who was once hindered of the devil (1 Th. 2:18), eventually overcame (2 Tim. 4:7).

Babies Cannot Fight

What a relief to know that though I may know nothing in actual detail about the devil's plans against me, yet in and through Christ I can defeat him on every count if my attitude is right! So I would urge the great importance of maintaining, as a principle, this attitude: that you are against the devil and against the materializing of his plans.

Of course, if you are a babe and cannot face the open battle, the Lord will protect you; He will answer the door to the assaults from hell. However, some are yet babes who should not be (Heb. 5:12). If you move on into maturity and working partnership with Christ, you will assuredly discover yourself to be upon a battlefield. Then you will understand the meaning of these terms: *“Be sober, be vigilant, because...”* (1 Pet. 5:8); *“Watch and pray, that...”* (Mt. 26:41); *“though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh”* (2 Cor. 10:3); we wrestle... stand... withstand... overcome.

We Conquer Through Christ

You will not doubt the existence of the devil then. Moreover, if you put on Christ (Rom. 13:14), and take *“the shield of faith.... and the sword of the Spirit,”* (Eph. 6:16-17) you will thrive in the fight (1 Tim. 6:12). *“Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”* (2 Tim. 2:3)

The Lord of life and victory can make you able for this; and just as you can bear it, He will lead you on and be with you and in you in the battle. If that were not so, you might well despair, but *“greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* (1 Jn. 4:4) He can, with your unbroken consent, display His **supremacy** and **demonstrate the triumph of His life**. Ask Him to teach you, count on Him to be with you, and dare to believe that all your foes **must give way** before the almighty weapons of His cross, His blood, and His Word (Rev. 12:11). **God in you, triumphing.** What a gospel!

Satan was conquered by Christ at Calvary. That is the ground of all our activity. But there is something more—Satan can be conquered by Christ in you. You resist him and prove it! If you are born of God, you were born to conquer (1 Jn. 5:4).

“How shall I resist him?” someone asks. The standard example is that of the Lord Jesus Himself in His representative temptation as the Head of a new race. He used the Sword. The Sword is the Word. It is not merely two-edged, but it is all edge. Christ quoted the Word. He did not cry to the Father only, but He turned on the devil with the authoritative words of Holy Writ. There was nothing complicated about it, He just drew the Sword and used it. Then the devil left Him, first for a season, then fully, till the final scene on Calvary, when all the forces of hell massed to the scene and were beaten (Col. 2:15).

The Power of the Word

Christ did not summon angels, or display that power which was His right as God the Son. He just did what we all need to do—He used the Word. To Him it was final and sufficient, the very breath of God. He was handling the weapon of omnipotence and divine authority. He knew the Word. He counted it sufficient. He used it, but He used it **against the devil**.

He did not quote it to His Father or recall it merely to refresh His own soul. The devil had said, “*It is written*,” (Mt. 4:6) but the Lord said more than that: “*Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written....*” (Mt. 4:10) Note that. He spoke to the devil and told him to go. And you may need to do the same someday.

Do not speak lightly about these things. The Holy Spirit has anticipated the tendency to lightness on this subject with a warning, “*Be sober*.” (1 Pet. 5:8) All frivolous talk on the subject is just so much fuel to the devil’s fire. It is not too much to add that while some people are mechanically saying, “Alleluia!” the devil is planning to steal a march on them. So be deliberate, reverent, and solemn in your use of the Word. It will do all it says.

Down through the ages Satan has striven to rob the man of God of his Sword. You can never use with assurance what you doubt. If you doubt the divine inspiration of Scripture, or if you put the inspiration of the Scriptures on the same level as music, you will fail when you meet the devil. The Scriptures are the oracles of the Most High, subject to none of the imperfections and limitations of humanity. Therefore, **they will do all they say**, and to believe less is to doubt the veracity of the Almighty. A myriad have staked their lives upon God’s Word and proved it to be true. Theological views and brain-spinning are of no use in this battle. You must come to the Book, to “It is written.” Unless you are there, or get there, the forces of evil will surely hem you in and take their toll. Watch, then, that you do not lose your Sword. Immerse yourself in the Word.

Recognizing the Devil’s Purpose and Plan

Sometimes people say, “But I am saved; therefore, I must be secure.” That is true as long as you continue in Christ. Upon many of the Lord’s people a storm from the pit has been allowed to break. Why? No tree is proved to be deeply rooted unless it encounters the gale. No

ship is shown to be seaworthy that has never been through turbulent waters. Peter's faith was tested in the devil's sieve, and yours may be, too.

Here it is well to remember the devil's primary objective. As God's implacable enemy, he is doing whatever he can to hinder God's work in your life. He is *"seeking to devour,"* and his ultimate goal is to recapture your eternal soul, which was torn from his grasp when Christ *"delivered [you] from the power of darkness, and... translated [you] into the kingdom of his dear Son."* (Col. 1:13)

Though Satan has no love for you, his greatest desire is have you join him in the *"everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,"* (Mt. 25:41) thus mocking the God who made you for fellowship with Himself. How great must have been the devil's delight when both Eve and then Adam succumbed to temptation, separating them from God, and plunging the entire race into bondage. Sin brought spiritual death to them that very day, and it will do the same to you (Gen. 2:17; Jas. 1:15).

Satan knows he cannot harm the soul that abides in Christ, so he will endeavor to weaken your devotion to God. One of his most effective avenues is by suggesting we should doubt God's love or ability. Since a living faith in God and His promises is the lifeline that binds us to Him, do not think it strange when you are tempted to cast away your confidence. *"Hath God said?"* (Gen. 3:1) was the venom that slew our first parents, and it is just as deadly today. *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."* (Heb. 3:12)

If Satan cannot recapture your soul, he will still try to sabotage your freedom and limit your faith. Many are the struggling ones who have accepted a life of less-than-complete consecration and abandonment to God, all because the devil succeeded in clouding their vision of victory.

Satan may certainly be able to outwit you at every turn, but he is no match for the Almighty. God has a plan and a path for you that will prevent failure as long as you are willing to take it. He is *"able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,"* (Jude 24) but that keeping is *through* temptations, and not *from* them. Each one is measured to what God knows we can bear; indeed, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Php. 4:13)

When God in His great wisdom removes some of the hedge about you, you may find your ear filled with the most insidious lies imaginable, for Satan fathered the craft. Darkness for light and light for darkness are both blended by his guile. The one that sedates the sinner with a false security is the same one that assaults the saved.

At such a time it is not an uncommon thing to be told by the devil that you are lost; and you may have become so confused that you half believe it. You try to recover yourself, but your thoughts have become like chaff in the wind. Everything seems to have gone. You may not even remember the Scriptures—at least those you want to. If you do, they seem to mock you (Jer. 20:7-8). Hell appears to be moved from beneath against you, but it is then that you are ready to discover whether salvation is by works or by grace.

How to Resist the Devil

What can you do? I know what I did. I remember taking hold of the Book, holding it aloft, and saying, “I believe in the God of this Book (Heb. 11:6), and all that this Book means to me, as a redeemed soul, I take, and stand upon, though I feel nothing. I refuse all the devil’s lies about me. I believe what this Book says: *‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.’* (2 Cor. 5:17) I am in Christ, not because I deserve it, or feel it, but because He took me in when I came. I do not remember the date, but I know I came, and I am in.” (You may not remember your day of birth, but you can surely know that you are alive—1 Jn. 5:13).

It is marvelous what a start like that will do. It is like removing the plug from an artesian well. The waters are released and flow forth (Jn. 4:14). The real life stream from God is set in motion. That is how you resist the devil.

But look at this matter further. One day you may take a nasty tumble. You prided yourself that you could never fall in that manner. But unknown to you, the devil undermined your citadel, perhaps by subtle inroads upon your feelings and affections. Gradually you cooled down in prayer and lost the keen edge of witnessing. Your Christian life became mechanical and powerless, though you would not admit it to others. Or maybe you made too much of your experience and too little of Christ. Anyway, you fell, and then the cloud gathered and you were enveloped.

“What about your salvation now?” the evil one asks. “What about your experience and testimony now? It is all a lie, you are a ‘*castaway*.’ You have committed the unpardonable sin. There is a curse upon you. You are a downright hypocrite.”

Such are the whispered taunts of the devil, and you believe them, because there is an element of truth in some of them. Try as you will, it seems that you cannot succeed in warding them off.

Then the thought comes: “I will confess it.” Happy soul, if sin is the only trouble. Confession to God in that case is the way out (1 Jn. 1:9). But such confession may not always sweep the decks as clean as you thought it would. Forgiveness is sure, but Satan is still on deck, causing more trouble.

I have known souls to spend hours upon their face before God, seeking deliverance. I have known them to confess their faults to others and solicit their prayer help. But though assured of the unmatched, immeasurable, absolute forgiveness of God, these troubled souls could get no settled peace. I knew one man who spent something like sixteen years in that state, and I believe that he was as saved as I am. But the devil succeeded in obsessing this man’s mind with one incident in which he said he “disobeyed the light.” A saved man, but silenced because he would not face this question about the devil!

Are you silenced? The forgiveness of sins is not merely according to your confession, but “*according to the riches of his grace*.” (Eph. 1:7) That is the message of the Ascended Lord.

Let me add this: when recourse to confession and the blood of Christ does not give you peace (as ordinarily it should do); and when the great truth that you are “*in Christ... a new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17) does not release you, remember that **the devil is an accuser**. Through the spirits of evil that invade this dark world Satan is working against you and will succeed in keeping peace from your heart until you resist him. The Lord silenced the demons. He suffered them not to speak (Mk. 1:34). I have known many believers who have dared to do this in the name of the Lord and have become gloriously free.

A Missionary Delivered

I think of the case of a missionary who had to leave the foreign field because of broken health that had followed a tirade of devilish accusations made against him. Poor man, he was almost out of his

mind and lived in despair! One thing was constantly being brought to his mind to accuse him and torment him.

From time to time, as I talked with him, I assured him that there is forgiveness. “You have owned up, as you must do, and now you must rest upon the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses you from all sin—not some sins, but all,” I said.

He would go on well for a time; but when the assault recurred, he would act like one in a frenzy.

“My brother,” I finally said, “You will never break this thing until you, in the name of the Lord, turn against the devil.”

Turn Against the Devil

“Am I not presumptuous? Will it not do if I pray to the Lord?” he asked.

“But you have prayed,” I reminded him, “and you get no better. The need in this case is to resist the devil. Tell him that he is a liar, that God has cursed him from the beginning (Gen. 3:14), that Christ has conquered him on Calvary, and that you say ‘amen’ to all that this means against him. Then ignore him, or tell him to stand back—a conquered foe—and you go straight on, assured that God will be with you.”

In his agony that man fell upon his knees. He acted—he resisted. He said, “The devil is cursed, and I say ‘amen’ to it; he was conquered at Calvary, and upon that I stand; and he has no right to any part of me. I am redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and I claim my freedom.” That man became one of the busiest Christian workers I know because he dared to use the Sword in that way.

These things are real. Their parallel in the Church could be multiplied a thousand-fold. Where do you stand? What are you doing to swell the ranks of those who “*labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*”? (Col. 1:29) Do you know anything about the might of the risen Christ operating through you? Are you filled with Christ in His power and supremacy as well as in His meekness and humility? Do not live a one-sided life. Meekness and gentleness are rare and precious qualities; but the “*Lamb*” (Rev. 5:6) is also a “*Lion*.” (Rev. 5:5) On the cross He was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). But now in you He is your strength (Php. 4:13).

The Weak Made Strong

One day I casually dropped in to see a friend and found him in bed.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

Then he told me the story of his repeated setbacks. “And it is generally when I am going to do something for the Lord,” he added.

“Well, friend,” I ventured, “it seems to me that what you need is to use the Sword of the Spirit more (Eph. 6:17). The Holy Spirit always anticipates your need by giving you some word or germ truth with which to battle, and He intends you to use it.”

Later he told me this:

I did not relish what you said to me about the Sword that day. “It is all very well for him,” I thought, “but he hasn’t got my thorn in the flesh.”

“The Sword—use the Sword more!” Let me see, what word did the Lord give me this morning? I paused, and then slowly it came back: “*Out of weakness... made strong.*” (Heb. 11:34) That’s it! Well, how striking—I had forgotten that.

“Yes,” the Lord seemed to say, “which will you have—My strength, or your weakness?” I had never thought of it like that, and I found myself changing my attitude, for, of course, I wanted His strength.

I rang the bell. My wife came. “Give me my clothes, dear. I am going to see —,” I said.

“No, you are not,” she objected. “You are not well enough.”

By this time I was more assured than ever that I had to act (Mk. 3:5). So I dressed myself, saying, “‘*Out of weakness... made strong.*’ Your strength, Lord, for my weakness.” I walked to the streetcar, repeating the verse over and over, **and definitely looking to the Lord Himself to make it true if I were to go on.** I went. I did the bit of service I had intended to do. I came back. But the marvelous thing to me is this, that I walked home. “*Out of weakness... made strong.*” Praise God!

Well he might praise God, for he had taken the Holy Spirit’s clue and resisted the devil’s covert attempt to keep him on his back, when by a deliberate, daring appropriation of the strength of Another he could be enabled to do the “impossible.”

Display the Triumphant Life

Are there not others like that? You know there are. There are some who are perpetual or periodical invalids for want of a changed attitude and a bit of resistance to the devil.

Please do not quote to me the names of the noble army of the bedridden whose saintly character and sacrificial service are in some

cases known the world over. I am not thinking of them, but of those Christians whose infirmities, weaknesses, and disabilities never seem to become, in any appreciable way, a platform upon which to display the grace of God (2 Cor. 12:9). Such take a passive attitude toward life, fold their arms, and say, “The will of the Lord be done.”

Just suppose that had been Paul’s attitude when he was pestered by the spirit of divination in the woman at Philippi (Acts 16:12-18). It was not, however. The Apostle knew his prerogative in Christ, and he used it. The Scriptures do not record that he cried to the Father, but this is what we are told: *“Paul, being sore troubled, turned to the [evil] spirit and said, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And [the demon] came out of her that very hour.”* (Acts 16:18 RV)

I contend for a continual renewal and display of the triumphant life of Christ in those who are united to Him, and a constant looking to the Holy Spirit to guide in each case or circumstance. We paralyze ourselves in this realm if we believe that such resistance to Satan is not necessary. And such a viewpoint is tragic both in the light of Scripture, and of the abundant evidence around us of souls sinking in a satanic quagmire. The evil one will do anything to silence them or make them helpless. God helping us, let us do what we can to get such persons on solid ground again. Let me repeat it: this is God’s work, but it is God in us, in the Person of the Triumphant Christ, who seeks to use us through whom to manifest His authority.

Don’t Give Place to the Devil

Are you given to moods? I suppose that all are to some extent. The devil has a large practice in that realm. Let me refer again to a bit of personal testimony. It was during the dark days of the first World War. Nothing was easy except “going under.” We were hewing our way through the conflict. The weeks of prayer stretched into months, but very little ease of spirit resulted. It was easy in the atmosphere which then prevailed for depression of heart and mind to set in. I confess that for a brief while I succumbed. I recall sitting in front of a cottage fire with my head in my hands, doubtful about many things, perplexed over others.

My daughter, who was six years old at the time, came up to me. Touching my arm, she asked, “Daddy, what’s the matter?”

“I can’t say, dear,” I replied.

“Oh, Daddy,” she rejoined quite seriously, “that’s the devil. I shouldn’t take it on.” I was too depressed in spirit to be amused, but her words came to me like a shaft of light from heaven. “It’s of the devil. Don’t take it on.”

“And neither will I,” said I to myself, as deliberately I rose to my feet, and in doing so became as free in spirit as I have perhaps ever been.

Does that touch your need? It may someday. Then you will know that you need that diagnosis of your trouble and that you must resist the devil, who will no doubt be making use of legitimate circumstances (Mt. 4:2-3) to draw you into a conflict and to plunge your spirit into darkness. When the conflict begins to spiritually paralyze you and make you feel helpless, suspect it as being the devil’s doings, and resist him.

God may burden you, but the devil will try to overburden you. In the former you are enabled in the Lord (1 Tim. 1:12) to triumph; in the latter you may become a misery to yourself and everyone around you. Do not mistake what I mean. You will not always be able to smile, but you will always be able to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). Triumph presupposes conflict, and conflict you will have; sometime, somehow, somewhere.

Part 2: Areas of Satanic Deception and Opposition

Bad habits affect people in different ways. There is the money-spending habit, in which the devil keeps even some Christian people on the run—buying, buying, buying. With some it is dresses and hats, with others it is books, furniture, or even automobiles. To save their lives, they cannot keep a penny in their pockets. They must always be getting something new. There is much of the devil in that.

I knew a woman of whom it was said that she'd had about sixteen different houses in ten years. She would buy a house, furnish it, live in it a few months, and then sell it. She was never at rest anywhere, and she never was well.

This was the work of wicked spirits. They edged their way into her life, meddled with her vitality, and then used physical weakness as the excuse for all that was happening. I tried to tell her about spirits of restlessness and infirmity, but like so many who are fond of sympathy, she preferred to nurse her weakness and keep it. Some have too much money to play with to resist the devil and **get well**. Having some regular duties involving hard work would cure a lot of ills and scatter a host of "infirm spirits" that imprison and weaken some people's bodies.

The Fashion Habit

Then there is the fashion habit—perhaps "craze" is a better word. While we are praying for the wearing apparel of our times to be remodeled according to God's pattern, there is a deliberate program on the part of the powers of evil to force upon us fashions having dangerous elements. Their campaign was launched under the plea of "health," but behind it is a subtle conspiracy of unclean spirits to **invade the senses**, steal away moral control, and eventually plunge the race into moral ruin. Here we have an echo of the express warnings of the Spirit of God concerning the "*last days*." (2 Tim. 3:1) Paul, by inspiration, foretold that men would have "*their conscience seared*," (1 Tim. 4:1-2) and that "*silly women*" would be "*led away with diverse lusts*." (2 Tim. 3:6) So it needs to be seen that the fashion world can become a virulent channel through which this terrible scheme can work.

God has anticipated that there would be peril in a woman's dressing immodestly; consequently, He has commanded that women are to

“adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety [lit. ‘in seemly guise, with modesty and discreteness’]... (which becometh women professing godliness).” (1 Tim. 2:9-10) Modesty and discreteness can be violated in a number of ways. Color, style, length, cost, and motive are all involved. Even when dresses were long and necks high there was immodesty, but today the swing of the pendulum has opened a large door for the devil to enter. Do not women realize that there are modes which can fan the passions of men into a flame?

Many fine women err in dress entirely through ignorance. They have no desire to look young or to attract men, and when cautioned on these matters say, “We had no idea that men were influenced by such things.” I hope that what is said here may be some guide to those who honestly desire to dress in a manner well-pleasing to God.

The assault is from all quarters. The majority of the profusely illustrated magazines seem to give precedence and prominence to photographs of scantily dressed women, and the swimming season is a camera harvest for the *“lust of the eyes.”* (1 Jn. 2:16) Advertising, whether in newspapers, circulars, or billboards, plays up the sex appeal—anything to attract the eyes—and nothing more easily does it. Some theater managers have admitted that many of the dresses used on the stage are deliberately designed to attract the men. Add to all of this the fact that most modern secular fiction is directed to *“[setting] on fire the course of nature,”* and you see that all around us blazes a **furnace of passion** which God declared to be *“set on fire of hell.”* (Jas. 3:6)

True, no matter how women dress, and no matter what conditions prevail, men must encase themselves in Christ in order to triumph. Thank God, they can do this, but you women have a responsibility. By sobriety and wisdom in dress you can do a great deal to stem the tide of the flesh (Rom. 13:14), which is always trying to corrupt the church. A few inches added to the length of a dress, or a change of color, may make the difference between modesty and immodesty. Make your clothing a matter of prayer; to neglect prayer here is to weaken your stand with God in the fight and impoverish the value of your witness to Christ and a holy life.

We all, in a measure, conform to custom and fashion, but we must not become slaves to them. What kind of moral judgment is it that has to wait for the prevailing fashion to dictate what is right or wrong? You can be sure that when fashion has worn threadbare one wile, the

devil has another ready to launch. If morality exists among certain unclothed races, it is because divine restraint prevails alongside ignorance (Gen. 20:6). We do well to remember our responsibility to weaker brethren (Rom. 15:1).

The “cropped hair” question is equally important before God. What He has ordained is right and best, and it is clear from 1 Cor. 11:14-15 that a woman’s hair should be long, while a man’s hair should be short.

A Warning to Preachers

There are many other bad habits. Many a solemn message has been utterly spoiled by a silly joke which was intended to illustrate, but which was entirely out of keeping with the occasion and hindered the work of the Holy Spirit. Many men of God are caught in this snare. A sense of pure humor is surely an endowment of the Almighty, but we need to be most careful and watch, lest the bounds of sobriety and propriety be overrun. Nobody wants to cultivate long-faced Christians. But *“Be sober, be vigilant,”* with regard to so-called humor, *“because your adversary the devil, walketh about... seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Pet. 5:8)

Resist him, man of God! Resist the devil’s “funny” interpolations in your sermons. Sacrifice popularity, if that is what makes you popular. *“Preach the word,”* (2 Tim. 4:2) not jokes and funny stories with a dash of religion. Then the Holy Spirit will seal every word you say, giving it the increase in due season (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

We should not merely deplore these things, but recognize their source, resist them, and thus remove from Satan a formidable weapon.

A Field of Effective Service

That brings me to this. There is a large field of effective service in the realm of prayer and resistance concerning wrong things in the spiritual world. The perils of the unseen seem always to be turning up in some new garb, though in principle they are the same.

I remember attending a certain conference to investigate what was being taught and to see what was happening. Before long I became very conscious of being in a strange atmosphere. It was weird. So far as I know I had no prejudices. I said, “Lord, I am open to all truth, but

I am closed to all error.” The longer I stayed, and the more I heard and saw, the more my spirit was aroused to war. For my own sake I found that I must resist, or be so enveloped as to lose my own power of choice and believe that everything from every quarter was of the Holy Spirit. I knew that it was not, and I said so. “This thing is of the devil,” I contended with bowed head, “and I resist it in the name of the Lord.” Some of the people were enraptured. Some looked mystified, and many stupefied; I was in deep agony of spirit and obliged to be against it.

The theme of the addresses was “The Baptism of the Spirit.” Many went forward to “receive the blessing,” as it was termed. While in the meetings, I quietly bowed before God and said, “Lord, I am against nothing of the Holy Spirit, but I am against the devil and his counterfeits, and I ask Thee to let me be of some use to Thee to protect these unwary souls.” I must shorten the story, but let me say this: not one of those who went forward during those meetings in which I so prayed received “the blessing” they sought. It was a lesson to me in resisting deceiving spirits.

The contention that where there is no “speaking in tongues” there is no true baptism of the Spirit, I hold to be unscriptural (1 Cor. 12: 10-11, 13, 30).

Now, I believe most certainly in that “enabling of the Spirit” which a vast number of believers need to make them effective for service, but there are grave perils in this realm. Souls must protect themselves (1) by knowing that unless they are watchful, they can be beguiled of the devil; (2) by insisting on retaining the full use of all their faculties of discernment and will; and (3) by refusing to be passive anywhere or in anything. Unless they do that and perhaps more, in full reliance upon the Holy Spirit to instruct them, they will be drawn into an evil, supernatural realm from which it may not always be easy to escape.

The Spirit of God will give us power for service in harmony with Scripture, and He will work through all our faculties, especially those of discernment and choice. It is when the mind and will are out of action that the devil has a free hand. It is doubtful if he ever neglects to take advantage of a situation of this nature. There is no use in quoting such passages as Luke 11:11 and saying, “God will not give me one thing if I ask for another.” We must have discernment—“*understanding what the will of the Lord is.*” (Eph. 5:17) God has bestowed in Christ every gift that man needs (Eph. 1:3; 1 Cor. 12:4-11). It is for us to **take**. We

are to “*apprehend that for which also [we are] apprehended.*” (Php. 3:12) If we continue to “*Walk in the Spirit,*” (Gal. 5:16) God will fit us, according to our need and measure, for all His will. Nothing else matters. Nothing else is necessary.

Satan Attacks Through Ordinary Things

It is not merely in seeking the baptism of the Spirit that people are beguiled of Satan, but in the ordinary affairs of life. A great deal of lethargy with respect to mind and will abounds among the Lord’s people. Many seem to think that when they are saved, God will decide things for them instead of giving them the ability to see for themselves what is right and wrong and what is wise and unwise.

“*Understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph. 5:17) might never have been written, judging by the way some people conduct their lives and homes. Some of them will do anything rather than get into the place of a responsible person endowed with the wisdom and decision of “*the new man*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) in Christ. There are those who are always asking for signs and indications in circumstances, forgetting that the devil can easily manipulate circumstances. I wonder that more of them do not ask for signs and tokens as to when and what they are to eat and drink. (I knew of one terrible case of the devil’s dictating when to eat and drink, and the man nearly lost his life. Through prayer and then personal resistance he was delivered.) But most of them cut their lives into two departments—one natural and the other spiritual. In the former they use their brain and will, but in the latter they just drift along. You never know what they are going to do in the spiritual realm, for their guidance is enveloped in some vaporous mysticism which nobody understands.

“*Be sober.*” (1 Pet. 5:8) Use your mind. Your brain has been redeemed as much as your heart. “*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*” (Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10; Rom. 12:2) Let the light of God create for you a new intelligence department—**understand** “*what the will of the Lord is.*” Say, “I must get to understand the will of the Lord.” This will call for faith and patience, but persist in coming to know God’s will for yourself by a regular searching of His Word. If you will do that, you will guard yourself against falling into many a snare of Satan. In addition, you will become increasingly efficient in the Lord’s service as His fellow-worker (2 Cor. 6:1).

A word of caution is needed here, however. There are some things that for the time being are by God's design veiled from our eyes, and the recognition of this sometimes places faith in its best setting to mature (Jn. 13:7).

Unsheathe the Sword

One of the worst things that can take place is that you lose the disposition to resist the devil, though the need for doing so may be ever so urgent. Many experience this, some because they are unwatchful, and others because they are ignorant. No matter how it is accomplished, it is a daring piece of work on the devil's part and results in some of those perplexing things in Christian service which seem unexplainable.

Those who are so unwise as to ignore the subject stand in a certain class by themselves. There is a realm, however, in which the power to resist is assailed and slowly weakened, until the fight is dropped and the soul is passive and helpless—a citadel at the mercy of its invaders. Not all cases reach that impasse; but let me tell you a few, the subjects of which were only too grateful for the deliverance which came to them through being able to retake the shield of faith and to again take up and wield the sword which they had dropped. Each one in the following cases found deliverance.

Meeting the Enemy on Strange Soil

Here is a man marvelously enlightened in what the devil does and able to explain the subject with rare clarity and power. The day comes when, eager for the spread of the gospel, he ventures into the battle zone of another country, but without any real understanding of the tremendous hold which the powers of evil have upon the people. The atmosphere is so controlled by opposing forces that any doubts which he may have had as to their existence or activity are now banished (Eph. 2:2). This is a real spiritual battle *“where Satan's seat is.”* (Rev. 2:13) Spiritually, it is simply suffocating, and if ever he needed to wrestle and pray, it is now. And he does—on his knees and on his feet. He used to do this in old England or in the United States of America with the comfort of human fellowship and sometimes with the impetus of another's “amen,” but now everything seems working to isolate him completely.

The days come and go, each bringing its added stress of conflict. Perplexing situations arise, disappointing things happen, the “east winds” blow with a bite never before experienced, and he is baffled. Hoping against hope that the tide will turn, he plods on. Maybe he tries through human effort to do the work of his God—a common failure of us all—but slowly his power to resist weakens and he becomes enveloped. His head is in his hands; none of those around him understand, if they even so much as perceive what is wrong. All is confusion and darkness to him. You might tell him some of the things that he himself said about “the way of victory” in such circumstances, but he will reply, “That was all right for England or the United States and the armchair; it is different out here.”

He prays—at least he tries to—but the heavens seem as brass; he weeps inwardly and outwardly, and the devil whispers, “Your being here is a huge mistake.” The agony deepens. Things happen of which I cannot speak. Trouble upon trouble sets in. It is an “*evil day*.” (Eph. 6:13)

“Resist the devil, brother,” someone urges, but somehow he cannot. If it occurs to him to do so, he either says, “It is of no use,” or “I cannot.” And to say that is, of course, fatal, for by a swifter process than you think, the attitude becomes “I do not want to.”

Romans 8:2 Is Good Medicine

What has happened? The man is depressed. His spirit is enveloped as in a mist by an unseen power. His will to act in certain directions cannot operate. He is as a man paralyzed, or as one in a faint. Indeed, he feels that would be a great relief and an easy way out. What David experienced in the physical realm (Ps. 55), this man is encountering in the spiritual.

One day a friend came along and repeated Romans 8:2 to him. As one aroused from sleep, he said, “Amen! Say that again.” The scripture was repeated. Recognizing that he had unconsciously been under a spirit of death (the devil’s objective is always to administer death of some kind), he continued to use that verse and other scriptures and finally broke gloriously free. That is resisting the devil.

You may not always be able to account for these things happening, but they do happen. In more ways than one a servant of God can be overwhelmed in spirit, hemmed in by the devil, drop the fight, faint by the way, and exist—yes, just exist—for a very long time under a spirit

of death. Do you know anything of this degree? Do you know someone in this condition? If you do, you will not blame but pray, and in spirit get alongside, so that the struggling soul may be lifted into the light. The life is there, but it is buried or not functioning. The spirit can be revived, the will can be renewed, the man can be dug out, but God may want you to raise the pick of prayer and lower the shovel of faith. If He does, do not delay.

A Deceptive Goal

Here is another worker, one with noted ability and keen tenacity in the fight. This one has taken the gospel from door to door, spoken in cottage and villa, at street corner and church, and souls have been saved and blessed. The devil is out to stop this, and he does. He stimulates an inordinate desire for visible results by giving visions of wonderful things that are going to take place. What is flashed across the imagination, and implicitly believed to be from God, does not come to pass, however, and slowly the soul is drawn into darkness and doubt. The power to resist is lost in an atmosphere of perplexity and confusion.

How easy at such a time to lose heart, to let everything go, to believe that all is a deception; and in consequence to become careless, prayerless, and almost as one that is godless, with the rudder of life at the mercy of the devil's seas! Some at this stage begin to drift back into the world—anywhere to get relief. They soon find that the world is very shallow and its pleasures transitory. No true peace can be found within its borders.

God must deliver, and He will. He proves that His child can be rescued from an enemy who is so wicked that he seeks to imitate the Holy Spirit.

"You shall be delivered," I said to such a soul. "The devil must let go. In the name of the Lord, and by His grace, you will be set free once again to witness to the power of Calvary."

What a sigh of relief came with the reply: "Oh, thank God, someone thinks I can be restored, for I have feared that my brain would go with thinking about it!" Praise God, the restoration came, and an important center of Christian service was benefited thereby.

There is recovery and restoration, and the deep lessons learned in such tribulation will mean that he who once "chased a thousand" will now chase ten thousand.

Weighed Down With Criticism

Here is a third case. This man has brought life to many a meeting and has stirred not a few by his words, but now he is rarely seen. He is spiritually cold, lifeless, and unapproachable. What is the trouble? Perhaps the tongue and pen of the critic have been busy, and he is misinterpreted, misunderstood, and maligned. “Well, he must expect that,” we say. “It is in the order of things for a servant of God to be thus tried.” That may be, but this man did not realize that the devil could bury him under it. At any rate, the devil has succeeded for the present. The man is down, depressed, introspective, certain of little, and overwhelmed with the nagging fear that God may have set him aside with no further use for him.

“Oh, that is his nerves,” says someone. “He needs a rest and a change.” Truly his nerves are affected, and he gets away and takes the rest; but he receives no real relief, for the tides of divine life that once enabled him to resist the devil must again flow if he is to be quickened. (In many cases even the physical health is dependent upon the spirit’s being kept open to God and free to cooperate with Him.) If weeping and yearning as well as resting could have brought him deliverance, he would have been on his feet long ago. Instead, despondency has bred despair, and despair is now courting disaster—the disaster that the adversary and devourer of souls is after all the time.

Lifting the Load

What is to be done for this man? Is he to be left to perish on the battlefield? No! He may be forsaken of men, but God has not turned against him. The Holy Spirit is alongside (the word *comforter* means “one called alongside to help”) to cool the fevered brain, to calm the troubled breast, and to make the wounded spirit whole.

How weary he is, none but he and God really know; and how unspeakably gracious are the ministrations of the Most High at such a time! What infinite patience, what tender compassion, what amazing love! Not for a week, nor for a month, but for years will the Spirit of God brood over the darkness and chaos if haply He may again see the unsheathed sword brandished in the bruised hand, the flash of victory in the tear-red eye, and the foe impotent at the trembling feet! Hallelujah! It can be so. Though the soul may have descended to depths unspeakable while floundering and groping in the underworld of

darkness, there can come a moment when the sky overhead is cleared, and he will see that God is well able to rescue him from his plight.

But what happened in this case? The greatest part of the battle was to get the man to will as well as to want to get free. We may want a thing without willing it. When that point was reached, then was real progress made, though at first it was slow. He said, “I *will* that God shall free me from this state, and I trust Him to do so.” That position was affirmed again and again, especially when the dawn of breaking day became obscured by angry clouds on an ever-changing sky. All the details cannot be given, but I know that the Spirit of God directed to things in his life that needed adjustment. The chief point, however, was that he refused to lose hope and kept his will set for deliverance. Slowly the sluice gates opened, and the waters of life again began to run into the dry-dock. What a work to have a hand with God in re-floating these broken but mended craft!

Are you in dry-dock? Have waters in which you once swam receded until you can scarcely see a trickle? Do not lose hope. God does not. Ask God for strength to reassert your will; set the rudder, count on God, and surely, if slowly, you will again sail on the waters of His ocean, as did he of whom I have written.

To the Rescue

It may have been a very small thing that gave place to the devil in each of these cases. It generally is (Gal. 5:9; Jas. 3:5). It may have been a thought, a feeling, a thrill of the affections, a flash across the landscape of the imagination—nothing more—but quite enough to account for everything. If only it had been detected and resisted when it was but a speck upon the horizon! But it was allowed to pass unchecked, and now a whole continent has been invaded and must be recovered inch by inch.

Shall we come to the rescue of such souls, “*to the help of the LORD against the mighty*”? (Jdg. 5:23) We may. But how the devil opposes our doing so, either telling us that it is not our work, or that the case is too difficult, or subtly disabling us from acting, when we would gladly do so and are weighed down with the need!

Shall we not, too, heed the warning and learn the lesson that is before us—watching as well as praying, and discerning between good and evil, that we may “*cast off the works of darkness, and... put on the*

armour of light”? (Rom. 13:12) All down the ages the powers of evil have conspired to invade man’s soul and wreck it, and now it would appear that more than ever the devil is marshalling his forces to steal in upon the citadel and take it by storm.

Guard Against Evil Imaginations

Have you ever caught yourself gazing into space and half consenting to all you saw without raising a query as to the source? This is one of the devil’s most fruitful fields of harvest, and he persistently labors to gain an acceptance of something which is his invention and no reasoned product of your own mind under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is not too far removed from spiritism proper, and many a horrible experience has been traced to seed plots sown in these passive, uncontrolled, mental musings. If you would live in victory, you will have to be most vigilant here and learn quickly to say “no” when the foe is at the window.

Not always are the things presented suggestive of evil. The devil assumes quite a different role with some people. Neither open sin nor small things appeal to them, so he flashes before them big religious schemes, bright ideas, sweeping campaigns, and stirring scenes in which they are to play a leading part; and they take the bait without thinking. It all looks so attractive. “See how it will extend the work of God!” But many a man has come to grief by not knowing that the devil could inflate his imagination with big schemes and kindle false revival fire in his heart.

Be Careful of “Great Ventures for Christ”

I recall the case of a man who was one of the keenest Christian workers for miles around, until he shut himself up to pray for a revival of which he was to be the leader, but which never materialized. His experience landed him in a mental home, and only slowly has he recovered from the effects of his imaginings.

Scrutinize the moving spirit behind great ventures for Christ. They are not all of God. Some can be born of human ambition and others of satanic vision. If the devil cannot quench your spirit, he will try to push you into going too far. These are some of the perils, but a real conquest and mastery can be ours if we will walk with our eyes open and not be too proud to learn.

Satan Tries to Sidetrack Veteran Witnesses

There is another section of the church against which the devil persistently wars. Many men run the Christian race well up to the age of fifty or sixty, and then somehow miss their way, or “go to seed.” Probably Paul had this in mind when he wrote, *“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* (1 Cor. 9:27) The word *castaway* means “disapproved” or “rejected.” What terrible peril for an apostle! **And if for Paul, why not us?**

There have been men who have borne testimony to some of the deepest truths the Scriptures teach and have spent from twenty to thirty years in Christian service, yet slowly or suddenly they have been shunted on to a siding. What is the reason? It makes you think, and ponder, and pray, if your spiritual senses have not become dulled to the place of indifference.

Whatever your age may be, do not allow the divine fires to smolder and die out. Stir up the gift that is in you (2 Tim. 1:6). Do not drift. Do not run the risk of being disapproved. Jam on the brakes before the downgrade momentum is so great that only a crash can stop you. Or if you have crashed, get up, hear the words of the Risen Lord again and again, *“Rise, and stand upon thy feet.”* (Acts 26:16) Dare to believe that God can restore you, your testimony, your spiritual vigor, your prayer vision, and maybe your health, too, if you have lost it (as you can) through stemming the tides of the divine life in you (Gal. 6:1; Hos. 11:8; 14:1-9).

The Gracious Restoration of God

You may not be given the same kind of work as before. That is not important and may not be the Lord’s will. The Lord is wondrously gracious and infinitely wise in His methods of adapting us to new circumstances. But be that as it may, refuse to let the devil keep his foot on you, for his place is under your feet. *“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.”* (Rom. 16:20) This is both a principle and a promise, so let him have your feet. Dare to get up. Be a Christian. Defy all the powers of darkness in the name of the Lord, and if nothing else will work, fall upon your knees and cry out, “O God, save me from the devil, for I mean to live and labor and die (if the Lord tarries) like a Christian.”

Desperate conditions call for drastic measures, and if there is one thing I know more than another, it is this: There is no soul who has gone too far for the Almighty to reach him (1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 7:25). The faintest glimmer of desire for deliverance finds abundant response in the embrace of redeeming love. Length, breadth, depth, and height—you cannot fathom it. It passes knowledge (Eph. 3:18-19), but it can reach you, because it is the expression of the very nature of God (1 Jn. 4:8). Men make barriers, but they were all dealt with at Calvary, and God can break through them all. The mighty forces of evil may gather to hold their prey, but they are less than nothing to the Almighty, who at the cross brought to naught *“him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* for the express purpose of delivering *“them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Heb. 2:14-15) Read carefully and prayerfully Isaiah 40:12-31, and you will see God in such majesty and power as to dispel all fear of the evil one and his wicked powers.

The Devil Is a Murderer

It may help someone if I touch briefly on another phase of satanic activity. It relates to the question of self-destruction. Let us not debate the question as to what God would allow in the life of His children, but deal with the facts as they are known to many. A young fellow, whom I knew to be saved and living a good and careful moral life, told me that he scarcely ever shaved without having suggestions and urgings to take his life. Moreover, he found it difficult to shave at all, as proven by his frequently cut face. Except that he was not having an easy time at home or with his friends at work—the type of persecution that is the common lot of the Christian—there was no particular natural reason to account for the depression and daily horrors through which he was passing.

I had had some experience with things of this kind, so I ventured to suggest that the devil was seeking his life. He was greatly relieved to know that his problem could be dealt with as something originating from a source outside his own mental life. Having prayed by himself with little relief, he asked me to pray with him, and I consented. “But,” I said, “it is something more than prayer to God that is needed. He will help you, but you have to stand ‘in Christ’ and tell the devil that you resist him in the name of the Lord, and that you refuse to let him move

you to take your life.” That was something new to him, but he did it and, praise God, was delivered! He was then able to shave without the slightest fear, for the devil, as a murderer, had been exposed and resisted. Moreover, the man knew what to do in any future assault and strengthened his position by praying for others in similar trouble.

I have told that incident at many meetings and have rarely found a gathering in which there was not someone who was pestered of the devil in a similar way. Usually the assault would be made under the pressure of home or business cares, after the recurrence of sinful habits that were deplored and wept over, or even during disappointment and despair over Christian service. The devil would use anything to persuade the man that he would be better out of the way. I thank God that I know that the power of Calvary works in this realm, and that what God may not take away in answer to asking can be cast off by resisting the devil on the ground of Christ’s finished work at the cross.

The Devil Opposes Prayer

Now a word about this subject in relation to prayer. A number of people tell me how sometimes it is difficult to pray, and that confirms my own experience. Indeed, the universal admission is that whenever people give themselves to prayer, they never find it easy. Stagnation in prayer may be encountered through lack of information, smallness of outlook, absence of vision, self-centeredness in petition, even slavishness to method, and, of course, walking *“after the flesh.”* (Rom. 8:1) Mark that brief summary.

Our Weapons in the Prayer Battle

But apart from all these, there are some striking passages of Scripture which make it abundantly clear that in the unseen world there is a tense battle for supremacy in progress all the time (Dan. 10: 12,21). That is a primary reason why prayer may be difficult—the devil opposes it. Read these sentences of Holy Writ and weigh every word: *“Labouring fervently for you in prayers.”* (Col. 4:12) *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”* (Eph. 6:18) *“Strive together with me in your prayers.”* (Rom. 15:30) *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (Jas. 5:16) *“Continue in prayer, and watch.”* (Col. 4:2) *“Watch unto*

prayer." (1 Pet. 4:7) "*Pray, and not faint.*" (Lk. 18:1) "*He... offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.*" (Heb. 5:7)

There are many more, but look at the words: "*labouring fervently,*" "*supplicating,*" "*persevering,*" "*watching,*" "*striving,*" "*strong crying,*" and "*tears.*" These are expressions wedded to work and war. They indicate a situation of dire necessity. They suggest deep urgency, sustained effort, undaunted courage, and a persistence and faith that is supreme. Why? Because the man of prayer operates in a world where every inch of the ground has to be taken in the teeth of the opposition. Make no mistake about it, the devil knows when a man is really praying effectually, and he does his utmost to stop him.

In some parts of Scripture the language employed is of a distinctly military character and unmistakably descriptive of the existence of a tense battle for dominion. What else can be meant by these words?—"*Put on the whole armour of God... stand against the wiles of the devil... we wrestle... withstand...*" (Eph. 6:11-14) "*Take... the sword of the Spirit... Praying always...*" (Eph. 6:17-18) "*Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are... mighty through God...)*" (2 Cor. 10:3-4) Here is the word *war* spelled out for us. Moreover, let us recognize the fact that the foe is so obstinate that he will let go only what he is compelled to let go, and he is so powerful that none but a God-endued man can overcome him. Even then the basis of that overcoming lies only in Satan's having been conquered by Christ at Calvary.

Are You a Wide-Awake Prayer Warrior?

Prayer is, of course, one of the most effective ways of administering the victory of Calvary, and it is one of the two tasks to which the apostles gave themselves (Acts 6:4). You can be sure that it will be hindered and assailed from all quarters. Who has not gone apart to pray and found his mind to go blank or be flooded with unholy or distracting thoughts? Some, on the other hand, fall asleep while at prayer. Again, it is surprising what a lot of things you remember that you have to do when you decide to pray! Have you ever associated these hindrances with the powers of evil? Do you realize that they can interfere in your prayer life?

I always associate the devil with that sluggish, helpless night which the disciples spent near our Lord on the eve of Calvary, when

reprovingly He said to them, “*What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray....*” (Mt. 26:40-41) I think that the devil must have caused them to sleep when they should have been vigilant and supporting the Lord in His conflict. The incident at least shows the advantage of fellowship in watching and prayer.

Writing About Praying Is Not Praying

Here and there we find souls who are so eager to pray that they wear themselves out in battle. They allow the devil to press them beyond the measure of the Spirit, as their physical collapse indicates. With most of us, however, there is a grave lack in prayer. If we understood the wide range of administrative power that prayer offers, we would pursue it to its limits and press the battle to the gates. Let us remember that talking and writing about prayer is not praying. The devil does not care how much we discuss and applaud the subject, so long as we do not pray. A book on how to pray is good, but the best and only way to learn to pray is to do it.

Place yourself at God’s disposal as a **pray-er**. Study as much to pray as to preach. Be ready to cooperate with God for the deliverance of some of the captive souls in the church and see what happens. You will no longer wonder if there are forces to contend with other than flesh and blood. You will know, and in knowing you will understand that unless these satanic powers are reckoned with, you are not going to get the answer you need.

Guard the Power to Pray

People who have discovered the value of prayer know that they will be assailed from every quarter and in every quarter, and they know it to be worthwhile to guard their power to pray more than anything else. How easy it is to lose the spirit of prayer! The Holy Spirit of God is so easily checked and grieved on our part that sometimes without our knowing it, our ability to pray is gone. We may not know it until we kneel to pray or are faced with some situation demanding immediate dealing with God, but such powerlessness soon reveals itself.

The thing to remember is that the devil is probably more concerned with hindering prayer than anything else. Therefore he schemes to get us to take ever so little a step “out of the Spirit.” A wrong look, a feeling of resentment, a hasty word, some apparently trifling thing,

and the line of communication is interrupted. A relatively little thing can rob us of our power to pray and our ability to believe.

Ready Access but Little Power

I do not mean that our **access** to God is surrendered. That remains intact, guaranteed through the blood and Person of Christ (Heb. 10:19; Eph. 2:18; 3:12). The working value of the blood of Christ implies a cleansed life (1 Jn. 1:9), and we must never forget that that is the only basis upon which we can speak to God.

But we can be deprived of our **power** in prayer. Real power in prayer to deal effectually with situations as they arise is rather rare, the reason being that the devil robs souls of the keen edge of their inner life without their knowing it. How much and for how long he can do this, some of us know to our sorrow, but once our eyes have really been opened to it, we should watch most carefully—“*be vigilant*,” (1 Pet. 5:8) as Peter puts it—and see that we are not drawn out of the current of the Spirit.

Fellowship in Prayer

This interference with praying will also be the common experience of those who are placed **together** in the Lord’s work; hence it is not at all an uncommon thing to find that missionaries, as well as home workers, often fail to meet for prayer through some trifling thing. Oh, these devil pinpricks! How tired one gets of them, knowing the devil is the cause!

Do pray and determine that the enemy be exposed in this matter and that those who need to pray together will want to and be able to. Many a work of God seems to lack vitality for want of this fellowship in prayer, and while it is certain that God can work mightily through the prayers of even one soul, there must be some significance in “two agreeing,” or the Lord would not have stressed it (Mt. 18:19). The truth is that two agreeing on earth in prayer can set in motion forces that were before motionless. Many a man has had to wait for his wife to join him in prayer before God did certain things; and conversely, in other situations the wife has had to wait for the husband. It is not always so, but one has often noticed things change for the better when a situation has been tackled by two or more who were formerly praying alone.

I do not want here to enter upon a dissertation on prayer, but I firmly believe that no kind of effective praying is left unopposed, and thousands could testify that all sorts of unwelcome things are constantly happening to make real prayer impossible. It is simply that the devil ceaselessly conspires to slay the spirit and atmosphere of prayer, and until this is recognized and **he is resisted**, many problems in relation to praying will remain unsolved.

Family Prayers Hindered

A godly man said this to me: “We live in the country, and we have family prayers every day; but try as I will to guard that time, you would be surprised at what a task it is to keep it free. Something is always happening to prevent us from praying, or to shorten the prayer time, or to make it difficult to pray when we get down to it.”

I replied that I was not surprised at all, but that probably it was the work of the devil.

“It is something,” he rejoined, “and I expect that’s it, for if I had not experienced it, I would scarcely have believed it.”

That experience could be confirmed by a multitude, but the degree of interference would largely be regulated by the vitality of the prayers, i.e., how far they affect the devil’s kingdom.

The Devil Sends Callers

I knew two people living in a city who decided to meet together for prayer on as many mornings as possible before beginning their daily visitation program, and this is what they told me: “We rarely have gotten far in prayer but someone will come knocking at the door of the house, asking us to go here or there, or can we do this or that, and sometimes they enter upon a long rigmarole from which it is often difficult to break away. Really it is very noticeable; and though we have prayed that we might have quiet, it still goes on.”

“Well, do you not know,” I asked, “that the devil has agencies by which he can influence people to call at your house at the wrong time and even flood you with callers whom God does not intend to come at all?”

“It may be,” I said, “that the exposure of the cause will end it, for many things are allowed of God to educate us. But if it does not cease, I would declare that in the name of the Lord you **resist** it and the

powers of evil at the back of it. Do that until you are assured of God that you have touched the real cause and dealt with it.”

Sometime after that, these workers told me that they had put into operation the suggestion to pray against the devil’s engineering interruptions through people and circumstances, and these interruptions had fallen off considerably.

It must not be supposed, however, that I attribute every difficulty in prayer to the devil. There is man’s carnal nature to contend with. We can be lazy and sluggish, or manifest a spirit of indifference or independence, thinking that we can do this or that, whether we pray or not. We can come under the dictum of the world and believe that “God helps those who help themselves.” That is not true. God helps those who trust Him, and in the long run nothing else will succeed, *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Mk. 8:36-37)

The areas covered by prayer are much wider than what we are dealing with in this discussion. I merely point out here the relationship of prayer to the unseen world (around this planet), invaded as we know it to be by countless spirits of evil, whose one aim is to be the adversaries of God and man, and as such to hate the praying soul and oppose him on every spiritual issue.

Groanings in the Spirit

Prayer is, of course, an **attitude** as much as an act, and if that be remembered, no perplexity will arise when there is a genuine absence of words as we wait before God. We must not allow the devil to perturb us because we cannot find language with which to unburden ourselves. A groan of the Spirit in us (Rom. 8:26) may accomplish more than a volume of words. One of the greatest things I have learned in prayer is to hold up before God individuals, towns, and nations, counting on Him to do His will for them when I do not know what more to ask for. Undoubtedly the ideal thing is to ask definitely, especially in the terms of Holy Writ, for the bedrock of faith is there; but if we should find ourselves going out, out, out in spirit to people and lands with no more audible expression than a heaving sigh of the spirit (Mk. 8:12), let us not be troubled or dismayed. The great thing is that we are “*praying in the Holy Ghost*,” (Jude 20) and in due season what is in our heart may filter intelligibly into the mind and be formulated upon our lips.

Divine Life Must Have Expression

But the “*groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Rom. 8:26) must not be confused with the dumbness that can come through the devil’s damping down our fires. Some people never do anything but groan, if they even do that; but when the prayer time is over, they seem to have a wonderful facility of speech. In most cases I believe it is simply that the devil hinders them. Either he overwhelms them with feelings, floods them with fear, or in some other way holds the brain so that expression in prayer becomes impossible. That this thing—this paralysis of expression—can be broken through, I have proved.

No one should sit down under this terrible dumbness. The divine life in us **must have expression**; and if the soul would grow and echo the heart throb of the Father, it must pray. So whenever you have the opportunity, dare to pray, and pray aloud. Do it on your feet, as well as on your knees. You will then more easily keep the stream of life running and baffle the devil. (Souls deprived of speech may serve God in their spirit—Rom. 1:9; 12:11; Is. 26:9; Ps. 139:2).

The Scriptures plainly show that the Christian life is lived on a battlefield. We are to be soldiers as well as sons, and as such we must take up the challenge of the evil forces in the heavens and **pray**.

Part 3: The Means of Victory

The more God's people reckon with the devil in their praying, the more they will taste of the liberty of the Spirit in dealing with the issues of life. The Christian life does not reach the stage of manhood until that is done, but the truth is that many believers are limp and flabby, weak and fearful, childish and immature, simply through failing to use the life and energy that is stored up for them in Christ. No one likes to feel that this is true of him, but if it be true of any one of us, is it not better to face it?

Satan Is a Defeated Foe

God can do no more than He has done. At the cross He judged the devil and overthrew him and his hosts (Jn. 12:31, 16:11). Believers overcome Satan because of this stupendous fact. We read in Rev. 12:11, *"And they overcame him by [on account of] the blood of the Lamb, and by [on account of] the word of their testimony."* The blood here refers to Christ's death. Not only are we saved from sin on account of that death, but we are also saved from Satan.

Further light is given on this in Heb. 2:14-15, where we read: *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* In the Colossian letter the same glorious truth is stated in these words: *"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in [the cross]."* (Col. 2:15)

There is another element in the Revelation passage just quoted that must not be overlooked. The believers are said to overcome *"by [on account of] the word of their testimony."* (Rev. 12:11) God wants that victory enforced through us by means of our spoken testimony. We know that the Lord Jesus rebuked Satan directly (Mt. 4:10). The archangel Michael rebuked Satan in the name of the Lord (Jude 9). The Apostle Paul directly addressed the evil spirits in the demon-possessed girl in Philippi and in the name of Jesus cast them out of her. Apparently the rebuking of evil powers in the name of Jesus was customary, for the sons of Sceva tried to imitate Paul in this; but lacking the personal application and benefits of the shed blood of Christ, they were soundly

beaten by the demoniac (Acts 19:13-16).

Thus the pattern is laid for us in the Word. It may be necessary to rebuke Satan in the name of the Lord in order to keep the prayer life and other areas of our Christian lives free from satanic hindrances.

But some will immediately ask, "Can we address Satan personally and rebuke him in the name of the Lord?" Yes, that is what the Scriptures just cited indicate. You may say something like this in withstanding the adversary: "I died with Christ; therefore, you have no more power over me. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you!"

Let me repeat: God can do no more than He has done. At the cross He judged the devil and overthrew him and his hosts (Jn. 12:31; 16:11), but it is through us that that victory has to be enforced. We are the links on earth through whom He is determined to realize the heading up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:18-19), and to the extent that the devil can hinder prayer, to that extent he hinders the Holy Spirit's working through us and keeps the purposes of God from maturing.

Remember that the devil is always engineering something to stop the prayer stream. All sorts of excuses will be invented to account for what he is doing under cover, but ask God to make you alert to detect if you are being robbed of your privileges in Christ.

Prayer Is a Battle

Read Daniel 10 with Ephesians 6 and you should never again wonder why you do not have an easy time at prayer, or why answers are sometimes delayed. Reckon on God, but also reckon with the devil, and then by vigilance and perseverance see to it that you are not hindered in pursuing a ministry, a work, a battle, the scope and issues of which cannot be measured. Satan hates prayer and hinders it, challenges prayer and chokes it. You may work and plan and talk until you are weary, but it will be in vain to the extent that you allow Satan to rob you of the prayer stream. Prayer alone vitalizes work.

Finally, this must be said: to resist the devil is but a healthy operation of the divine life. Just as the white blood cells police our bodies to apprehend and slay disease germs, so the spiritual life needs the energy of the might of Christ to garrison it from the deadly inroads of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Seek Guidance of the Holy Spirit

Take caution here not to lay down hard and fast lines of procedure in this field.

Some people are highly demonstrative. Luther, with white heat of spirit, flung the inkpot across the room to express against the devil his indignant protest, but you need to be a Luther to do that safely. I knew a man who would sometimes open the window, tell the devil to go, and then close it again and by that method be assured of Christ's victory being enforced. But there is nothing in flinging an inkpot, opening a window, stamping your foot, or shaking your fist if the Spirit of God is not in that mode of expression. Neither a bolted door nor a barred window can exclude the devil unless there be a corresponding bolting and barring of the man himself. Such gestures, however, are not necessary. We do well to speak and act much more soberly when grappling with these forces, for Satan has awful power and can only be met "*in the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:16) and "*in Christ.*" (2 Tim. 2:1)

Certainly we need to be careful lest we mistake physical force and a loud voice for the power and authority of the Spirit. The former cannot make up a deficiency in the latter. God can operate as effectively in the calm of a setting summer sun as in the hurricane of a November gale. The God who answered by fire was He who tabernacled in the still, small voice (1 Kgs. 19:12). The grieved spirit that loudly demanded, "*Lazarus, come forth,*" (Jn. 11:43) was endowed with the same life that displayed its strength in silence when Christ confounded His accusers by answering them "*never a word.*" (Mt. 27:14)

So faith may be mightiest when it is quietest. But it is for each one to know for himself. The more spiritually healthy we are, the less we shall be exactly like other people. There is an individuality and originality in all of God's children which in their lives should display some new wonder of Christ's life.

Our Standard Is Christ

The standard example is always that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and from even a cursory review of His temptation and His battle with the devil we may gather some eternal principles. In reading Mt. 4:1-11 (see also Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13) we see the following facts.

The devil has to be met when he is at his worst—in solitude, "*in the wilderness,*" "*with the wild beasts.*" Watch your solitude!

But the Spirit of God is sovereign. He sets the battle and supervises it, for we read, “*Then was Jesus led up of [Mk., ‘driven by’] the Spirit.*” (Mt. 4:1)

Satan speaks and suggests, incites and allures, misrepresents and lies. He knows the Scriptures and clothes his daring assault in their terms.

Each part of man is assailed—the needs of the body, the pursuit of the soul, and the urge of the spirit.

1. THE BODY. Hunger must not master the body. “*Man shall not live by bread alone.*” (Mt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4) Our bread and butter are not everything.

2. THE SOUL. Divine power is bestowed for special needs, not for personal demonstration or display. Presumption is not faith. Misquoted and misused Scriptures can hide disaster behind a plea of safety.

3. THE SPIRIT. The devil craves our worship, but that belongs to the Most High, whom we are to serve with an undivided heart. “*Him only shalt thou serve.*” (Mt. 4:10; Lk. 4:8)

Notice in all this that the Man himself is not passive in this battle, though the victory is not in Him, but through the Spirit. He spoke: “*Jesus said.*” He declared: “*It is written.*” He reproved: “*Thou shalt not tempt.*” He rebuked: “*Get thee hence, Satan.*”

He is given a sword, which is “*the sword of the Spirit,*” (Eph. 6:17) the very breath of the Almighty—insuperable, because infallible; reliable, because authoritative; enduring, because eternal.

A sword means that there is war, prolonged, tense, exhausting. Note the words “*forty days.*”

The sword must be used: “*Take the... sword of the Spirit.*” He used it. It does all it says. It always will.

There is victory, progressive and complete. “*Then the devil leaveth him.*” (Mt. 4:11) “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” (Jas. 4:1) Satan comes in arrogant confidence, but he goes defeated. That is God’s plan for you and me.

Of course, all that the Lord did was as representative as it was personal. Except as the Head of a new race, He had no need to meet the devil. But He met him and met him for us. He conquered him and conquered him for us. What He did, we do in Him, so that in all our battles we are simply to manifest His life, display His power, and celebrate His victory by using His sword.

It may be that some Christian people elbow their way through life without much attention to these things, but it can only be “anyhow

and not triumphantly.” The normal Christian life is one of battle and victory, and Calvary has made every provision for this. You may refer me to the desolation of Job or the piercing thorn of Paul (2 Cor. 12), both of satanic origin, but I see these men emerge triumphant, borne along in the strength of Another, energized by the only Life that can overcome. To the one as much as to the other the Redeemer lived (Job 19:25). We may never be faced with the great trials of such saints as these, but we must face the facts and issues of life, and in doing so decide what our attitude is to be.

Filled With the Spirit

Do you realize that we are called to conquer and, as such, are designated “*workers together with [God]*”? (2 Cor. 6:1) Shall we receive the grace of God in vain (v.1)? Shall He who laid down His life for us never see us fully yielded to the surging power of His presence? Shall the torrents of life that dwell in the Eternal merely lap the shores of our existence, leaving us high and dry, while there is an ocean within our reach?

“*That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*” (Eph. 3:19) What can these words mean if not that the tidal wave of Calvary is destined to flood our banks and sweep us now into a new and eternal sphere of life and fellowship with God? If we allow Him to do this, no call to arms will escape us; and though the battle be taken to the very gates of hell, we shall emerge unscathed, “*more than conquerors through him that loved us.*” (Rom. 8:37)

What shall be the response? Is there no battle? Is the devil slumbering in the dust of ancient tombs? Are there no bruised and battered souls to restore? Is no one submerged beneath the waters of mental stress, or struggling in a grave of moral torment? Does not dread often assail the sick and fear haunt the footsteps of the frail? Shall accusation and depression stalk through the church unchallenged, and the nervous system of the sensitive and the strong be wrecked by a foe who is laden with lust and draws death as “*with a cart rope*”? (Is. 5:18) Is no voice to be raised against this infernal procession? Is there no Aaron to rush in with the censer and stay the awful plague? Does not the Most High desire to turn and “*whet his sword*”? (Ps. 7:12) But who will be God-armored and clasp the unsheathed blade of His invincible breath (Jn. 1:1)?

Laborers Together With God

Will you? You may, by His grace. “*For God’s fellow workers we are.*” (1 Cor. 3:9, lit. Greek) (Grimm’s Lexicon says the word means “a joint-promoter; a partner in labour.” See also 2 Cor. 6:1, “to put forth power together”; Mk. 16:20, 1 Th. 3:2, “one whom God employs as an assistant.”) Have you ever paused to think what that means and to assimilate it? The whole content of redeeming love and life has been poured into the Calvary sacrifice of Christ, and from the empty tomb of the Savior, who could not be held by death, has emerged the triumphant Head of a New Creation.

Blessed be God, then, for the new man in Christ is to be the vehicle for the display of the self-same energy of the Godhead along every road of divine activity. Have you yielded to the stupendous issues of such a fellowship? Then all the powers of hell are to know it, for where God works, you work. “*Labourers together with God*”—what a commission!

Silence all arguments. Say, “Whatever God has for me in this, I am taking it,” and you will be shown more clearly than I can say for what purpose you have been brought into conflict with the most formidable foe that exists, to the realization of the plan and the purpose of the Almighty.

Then must I always be fighting? Until the Lord returns for His own, as one day He surely will, the Christian must never put off his armor or lay aside his sword. He may be a victor on the field, but to be assured of it he will need to plumb the depths of 1 Peter 5 and scale the heights of Ephesians 6.

Our Text Again

If we take our text, in all its beautiful simplicity, we cannot be mistaken as to the meaning, and the sequence is clear: humility, submission, endowment; sobriety, vigilance; a foe, a battle, a victory.

Acknowledge your need of God. Having been saved by His merciful hand, now humble yourself under His mighty hand. He giveth grace to the humble, and you’ll be endued with the strength of His might. There is a reason for this. You have a foe. He who all down the ages has relentlessly and tirelessly pursued his foul purpose now opposes you, and it is your life that he wants. He is the devil—not “it” but “he.” “*Whom resist.*” Do not be careless or indifferent, and certainly not erratic; take nothing for granted, go about with your eyes open, use

them, let nothing escape your notice, scrutinize and test everything, weigh all in the eternal balance. Count on God. Face the devil. Resist him, and he will flee from you.

If someone else had urged you, you might well have hesitated, but since it is God who speaks, you have naught to fear. He in Whom you stand, by His grace, is impregnable. Do as you are bidden. Your triumph is guaranteed, because He who holds the world in the hollow of His hand is before you, behind you, above you, beneath you, and best of all, in you. *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* (1 Jn. 4:4)

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him. for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant. because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet. 5:6-11)

*“Be sober, be vigilant;
because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,
walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
Whom resist stedfast in the faith.”*

Life is a battlefield. The foe we face is not flesh and blood, but Satan himself, the spiritual arch-enemy of God and man. He has had six thousand years of practice in taking souls captive, and now he is stalking you.

Thank God, the devil is a defeated foe. Christ conquered him at Calvary, and has paved the way for every Christian to be an overcomer as well. The Scriptures are full of warning, exhortation, and encouragement for the soldier of the Lord.

In this book, a veteran of many battles offers you insight and inspiration to *“Put on the whole armour of God,”* and learn

HOW TO RESIST THE DEVIL